

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Original) A vegetable article which has been subjected to a crosslinking reaction by using a crosslinking agent so as to inhibit worsening in initial characteristics thereof.
2. (Original) A process for producing a vegetable article, comprising:
subjecting the vegetable article to a crosslinking reaction by using a crosslinking agent so as to inhibit worsening in initial characteristics thereof.
3. (Original) A vegetable article which has been subjected to a crosslinking reaction by using a crosslinking agent, wherein a moisture content change index after washing and dehydration according to JIS L 0217 103 method defined by the following equation is 0.9 or less.
Moisture content change index = A/B
A: Moisture content after one-time washing of crosslinked vegetable article
B: Moisture content after one-time washing of uncrosslinked vegetable article
4. (Original) A vegetable article which has been subjected to a crosslinking reaction by using a crosslinking agent, wherein a bulk density change index before washing and after washing and drying according to JIS L 0127 103 method defined by the following equation is 0.7 or less.
Bulk density change index = $\{(C1 - C0)/C0\}/\{(D1 - D0)/D0\}$
C0: Bulk density before washing of crosslinked vegetable article
C1: Bulk density after one-time washing of crosslinked vegetable article

D0: Bulk density before washing of uncrosslinked vegetable article

D1: Bulk density after one-time washing of uncrosslinked vegetable article

5. (Original) A vegetable article which has been subjected to a crosslinking reaction by using a crosslinking agent, wherein a lightness (L*) change index before washing and after washing according to JIS L 0217 103 method defined by the following equation is 0.7 or less.

Lightness change index = $\{(E1 - E0)/E0\} / \{(F1 - F0)/F0\}$

E0: L* before washing of crosslinked vegetable article

E1: L* after one-time washing of crosslinked vegetable article

F0: L* before washing of uncrosslinked vegetable article

F1: L* after one-time washing of uncrosslinked vegetable article

6. (Currently Amended) The vegetable article according to claim 3 ~~or 4~~, which comprises a fiber aggregate except for a fruit or a husk and a peel of the fruit and a general-use natural cellulose fiber.

7. (Currently Amended) The vegetable article according to claim 4 ~~3 or 5~~, which comprises ~~one kind or plural kinds selected from a leaf, a stem, a trunk and a root of a plant~~ a fiber aggregate except for a fruit or a husk and a peel of the fruit and a general-use natural cellulose fiber.

8. (Currently Amended) ~~A product comprising the~~ The vegetable article according to claim 3, 4 or any one of claims 3 to 7 ~~which comprises one kind or plural kinds selected from a leaf, a stem, a trunk and a root of a plant.~~

9. (New) The vegetable article according to claim 5, which comprises one kind or plural kinds selected from a leaf, a stem, a trunk and a root of a plant.

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10. (New) A product comprising the vegetable article according to claim 1.